

Shakespeare Songs
Harmonium, A Classical Choral Society
May 19 and 20, 2001

Program *Notes*

<u>Orpheus With His Lute</u>	George MacFarren (1813-1887)
<u>Full Fathom Five</u> (men)	Elliot Z. Levine (b.1949)
<u>Vier Gesaenge</u> op. 17 (women) Es tönt ein voller Harfenklang Lied von Shakespeare Der Gaertner Gesang aus Fingal	Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)
<u>Shall I Compare Thee</u>	Nils Lindberg (b. 1933)
<u>Serenade to Music</u>	Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

Soloists: Leslie Adler, Marc Persing, Ken Hess, PJ Livesey, Bonnie Pomeroy, Barbara Shalit, Rob Morse, Jabez Van Cleef, Jack McGrath, John Lamb, Kathryn Deguire, Laura Wolverton, Maria Hladczuk (Sat.)

<u>Rumour</u> Grand Prize Winner, Paramus High School	Chris Giarmo (b. 1983)
<u>It Was a Lover and His Lass</u> Mark Hewitt, Laura Wolverton	Ward Swingle (b.1927)

HARMONIUM CHORAL SOCIETY

INTERMISSION

<u>Two Madrigals from The Tempest</u> Where the Bee Sucks (women) Full Fathom Five (men)	Robert Johnson (1611-?)
<u>Two Glees</u> Crabbed Age and Youth Full Fathom Five	R.J.S.Stevens (1757-1837) Charles Wood (1866-1926)

[Sweet Sounds](#) from Musicquotes

Stephen Paulus (b.1949)

Three from Macbeth

[Tomorrow](#)

Dick Thompson (b. 1925)

[Witches Stew](#)

Edward Corson (b.1949)

Linda Lancaster, Beth Branigan, Linda Clark, witches

[The Tragedy of Macbeth](#) from Jazz Canons

Ron Drotos (b. 1964)

HARMONIUM CHAMBER SINGERS

[Music to Hear](#)

George Shearing (b.1919)

Music to Hear

Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day?

Is It for Fear To Wet a Widow's Eye?

Randi Jermansen, soloist

Sigh No More, Ladies

Blow, Blow Thou Winter Wind

[Shakespeare Songs Books III & IV](#)

Matthew Harris (b. 1956)

It Was a Lover and His Lass

You Spotted Snakes

Sigh No More, Ladies

O Mistress Mine

David Thomson, soloist

Blow, Blow Thou Winter Wind

And Will A'Not Come Again?

When Daffodils Begin to Peer

Nancy Bangiola, Bill Corson, soloists

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Joan Tracy, piano

Merynda Adams, harp

Ann Mendoker, Leeann Newland, horns

Ruth Zumstein, violin

Linda Trebing, string bass

PROGRAM NOTES: Choral music is at its best a happy marriage of great words and great music. As we've rehearsed this spring, it has been a wonderful experience for us to immerse ourselves only in the words of the Bard! Shakespeare has inspired in many a composer a rather "popular" style -- from the glees of the 19th century, to the smooth jazz of Shearing and Swingle.

The “glee” is a 19th century partsong imitative of the madrigal style. As early as the mid-eighteenth century, various amateur “Madrigal Societies” were formed to revive “early music” and created a need for new compositions. These choral songs were more harmonically conceived than old madrigals, and more suited to the choral sound. Such composers as George MacFarren created idiomatic compositions in a genuinely new “Victorian” style, and Shakespeare was a favorite text source. One of several MacFarren Shakespeare settings, the text source of *Orpheus with His Lute* is Henry the VIII, Act II, scene i. ([to top](#)).

Full Fathom Five seems to be one of the most popular texts of choice for composers of all periods, several of whom are represented tonight. Elliot Z. Levine, baritone for the Western Wind Vocal Ensemble is one of Harmonium’s favorite composers and friends. His Cantata of the Animals was commissioned for, and premiered by, Harmonium in 1996 and performed by us at the Eastern Division ACDA Convention in 1997; his Serpent Song commissioned for our Outreach Chorus is performed by them in schools throughout New Jersey. Elliot received his M.M. from the Manhattan School of Music and his B.A. from Queens College. He has also studied music at the Orff School in Salzburg; and composition with Robert Starer at Brooklyn College. He is composer-in-residence at the Church of St. Thomas More in New York City and has been awarded five Meet-the-Composer Grants. He has composed choral works, instrumental chamber music, solo songs, and film scores.

Here’s what Elliot told us about the piece:

Full Fathom Five was written at a Western Wind Workshop at Smith College one night when one of the faculty said, "I could use a piece for four guys. I've got the women doing something by themselves." Well what a perfect challenge for a composer. I browsed through a madrigal collection to find an inspiring text. I've always loved this text from *The Tempest*. The Harmonium performance will be the second of this piece. ([to top](#)).

Works for chorus form the largest category of Brahms’ oeuvre after solo songs. His technical mastery of the choral texture was part of the legacy he received from Robert Schumann, who encouraged young composers to study vocal polyphony. Brahms also had first hand experience, conducting and rehearsing the Hamburg Women’s Chorus (Hamburger Frauenchor), who premiered his early works for women’s voices (*Ave Maria*, *Psalm 13*, *Marienlieder*). The Four Songs op.17 show a clear leap to maturity, and Brahms’s tribute to the romantic delight in harps and horns. Only the second song is on a Shakespeare text. In the tranquil first movement, “Es tönt ein voller Harfenklang”, based on a poem by Friedrich Ruperti, opening horn notes recall nature’s own music:

Es tönt ein voller Harfenklang,
Den Lieb’ und Sehnsucht schwellen
Er dringt zum Herzen tief und bang
Und lässt das Auge quellen.

Harp notes ring forth,
increasing love and longing;
they pierce, deep and quivering, to my heart,
and leave my eyes o’erflowing.

O rinnet, Tränen, nur herab,
O schlage, Herz, mit Beben!
Es sanken Lieb’ und Glück ins Grab,
Verloren ist das Leben!

Fall then, my tears;
heart, throb and tremble;
love and happiness lies in the grave,
my life is lost!

The second, on a text by Shakespeare translated into German by Schlegel, continues to exploit the horn call motif, with a light partsong quality in the women's voices:

Komm herbei, komm herbei, Tod!
 Und versenk in Cypressen den Leib.
 Lass mich frei, lass mich frei, Not,
 Mich erschlägt ein holdseliges Weib.
 Mit Rosmarin mein Leichenhemd,
 O bestellt es!
 Ob Leib ans Herz mir tödlich kommt,
 Treu' haelt es.

Come away, come away, death,
 And in sad cypress let me be laid.
 Fly away, fly away, breath,
 I am slain by a fair cruel maid.
 My shroud of white, stuck all with yew,
 O prepare it!
 My part of death, no one so
 true did share it.

Keine Blum', keine Blum süß
 Sei gestreut auf den schwärtzlichen Sarg.
 Keine Seele, keine Seel' grüss
 Mein Gebein, wo die Erd' es verbarg.
 Um Ach und weh zu wenden ab,
 Bergt alleine mich,
 Wo kein Treuer wall' ans Grab
 Und weine.

Not a flower, not a flower sweet
 On my black coffin let there be strewn
 Not a friend, not a friend greet
 My poor corpse where my bones shall be thrown.
 A thousand, thousand sighs to save,
 Lay me, O where
 Sad true lover never find my grave,
 To weep there.

The third movement is strangely reminiscent of Mendelssohn's setting for two sopranos, of the same text by Joseph von Eichendorff:

Wohin ich geh' und schaue
 In Feld un Wald un Tal
 Vom Berg hinab in die Aue:
 Viel schöne, hohe Fraue,
 Grüss ich dich tausendmal.

Wherever I go or look
 in field and wood and valley
 from mountain down to meadow,
 loveliest and noble lady,
 I greet you a thousandfold.

In meinem Garten find' ich
 Viel Blumen, schön und fein,
 Viel Kränze wohl draus wind' ich
 Und tausend Gedanken bind' ich
 Und Grüsse mit darein.

In my garden I find
 many a lovely, delicate flower;
 many garlands form there I weave,
 with a thousand thoughts and greetings
 in them intertwined.

Ihr darf ich keinen reichen,
 Sie ist zu hoch und schön,
 Die müssen alle verbleichen,
 Die Liebe nur ohne Gleichen
 Bleibt ewig im Herzen stehn.

None of these dare I offer her,
 she is too high and fair;
 they must all wither away,
 but only love without compare
 remains forever in the heart.

Ich schein' wohl froher Dinge
 Und schaffe auf und ab,
 Und ob das Herz zerspringe,
 Ich grabe fort und singe
 Und grab' mir bald mein Grab.

I tend happy things
 and labor back and forth,
 and though my heart should break
 I dig away and sing,
 but soon will dig my grave.

The last movement, written just a little later, captures the somber Nordic mood of Ossian's poems (in an anonymous German translation) and foreshadows *Gesang der Parzen* (Song of Destiny) with its relentless dactylic rhythm which symbolized the impossibility of evading destiny. With the low colors of horn and harp and the funereal quality of the women's voice, the effect is quite dramatic.

Wein' an den Felsen der brausenden Winde,
 Weine, o Mädchen von Inistore!
 Beug' über die Wogen dein schönes Haupt,
 Lieblicher du als der Geist der Berge,
 Wenn er um Mittag an einem Sonnenstrahl
 Über das Schweigen von Morven fährt.
 Er is gefallen, dein Jüngling liegt darnieder,
 Bleich sank er unter Cuthulins Schwert.
 Nimmer wird Mut deinen Liebbling mehr reizen,
 Das Blüt von Königen zu vergiessen.
 Trenar, der liebliche Trenar starb,
 O Mädchen von Inistore!
 Seine grauen Hunde heulen daheim,
 Sie sehn seinen Geist vorüberziehn.
 Sein Bogen hängt ungespannt in der Halle,
 Nichts regt sich auf der Haide der Rehe.

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Weep on the rocks of the roaring winds,
 Weep, o maid of Inistore!
 Bend thy fair head over the waves
 thou lovelier than the ghost of the hills,
 when it moves, in a sunbeam, at noon,
 over the silence of Morven!
 He is fallen! The youth is low,
 pale beneath the sword of Cuthulin.
 No more shall valour rise thy love
 to match the blood of kings.
 Trenar, graceful Trenar died,
 O maid of Inistore!
 His grey dogs are howling at home;
 they see his passing ghost.
 His bow is in the hall unstrung.
 No sound is in the hill of his hinds.

Scandinavian composer Nils Lindberg's contemporary *Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day* combines aspects of the part song with sumptuous jazz-influenced harmonies. [\(to top\)](#)

The prolific Ralph Vaughan Williams is considered the personification of Englishness in music. The influences on his style, ranging from Debussy to folk music, a violinist's feeling for melody to experiments with modern dissonances, were tempered always by sincerity and a desire that his works grow out of his life and experience. *Serenade to Music* was written in 1938 to celebrate Henry Wood's jubilee as a conductor, and is dedicated to him. It is scored for sixteen solo voices and orchestra, and was written specifically for sixteen singers associated with Wood, whose initials are published right in the score to this day. Each singer was given a phrase which is particularly suited to his or her individual style of performance. The pastoral writing represents a return to modal/diatonic harmonies after the angular, discordant harmonies of the *Fourth Symphony*. Impressionist influences of Debussy and Ravel are as strong in this piece as in any other Vaughan Williams' works. The work can be performed with chorus or soloists and orchestra or piano. Tonight we chose a middle ground with chorus and soloists on the individual lines, semi-orchestrated with our harp and horns and the all-important violin soloist. The text is from *Merchant of Venice*, Act V, scene i. [\(to top\)](#)

Chris Giarmo is the grand prize winner of Harmonium's fourth annual New Jersey High School Student Choral Composition Contest with *Rumour*, the text of which is from the introduction to *King Henry IV*. Chris, a senior at Paramus High School, serves as president of the concert choir. He has exhibited extraordinary musical talent since he was very young. In addition to studying piano for twelve years and singing in school choruses since fourth grade, he has arranged several pieces for his school choir, been vocal captain for the past two PHS musicals, and sung in the

Bergen County and North Jersey Regional choruses. Chris is also an avid actor, and will be attending New York University's Tisch School of the Arts for Experimental Theatre in the fall of 2001. ([to top](#)).

Ward Swingle was the product of an unusually liberal musical education. In his hometown, Mobile, Alabama, he grew up with the sound of jazz and played in one of the great big Bands before finishing high school. He graduated from Cincinnati Conservatory and studied piano with Walter Gieseking in postwar France. In Paris in the sixties he was a founding member of the fabled Double Six of Paris, then took the scat singing idea and applied it to the works of Bach, hence the Swingle Singers, whose early recordings won five Grammys. When the Paris group disbanded in 1973, Swingle moved to London and formed an English group--still touring with classical and avant-garde works as well as vocal jazz arrangements. *It Was a Lover and His Lass* is an original work which captures the laid-back feel of a spring roll in the hay... ([to top](#)).

The first two works which the Chamber Singers present are by Robert Johnson and the only truly Shakespearean works in the concert, in that the music (originally in two parts with a middle voice added later) was probably composed for and performed in productions of *The Tempest*. ([to top](#)).

The next two romantic partsongs, or glees, are so obvious as to be charming. Richard J.S. Stevens was trained as a choirboy at St. Paul's cathedral and became an organist and Gresham Professor of Music. Charles Wood is even better known as an Anglican church musician of a slightly later period--and slightly more harmonic daring can be heard, especially at the transformation "into something rich and strange." The text painting (including the "ding-dong") is an attempt to write in a consciously madrigalian way. ([to top](#)).

Stephen Paulus is one of America's most prolific and accomplished composers, a recipient of Guggenheim and NEA Fellowships. As well as serving as Composer-in-Residence for orchestras of Atlanta, Minnesota and Tuscon, he has been Composer-in-Residence for the Dale Warland Singers, and has written a large body of choral music on texts from medieval to modern. *Musicquotes* is a six movement work for chorus, to be performed both a cappella and with piano. Written in 1997 for Jim Kimmel, it was commissioned by the Illinois Chapter of the American Choral Directors Association. Movement IV, *Sweet Sounds*, which we have permission to excerpt, is the only text of Shakespeare in the set. ([to top](#)).

Our set of texts from *Macbeth* also shows off local talent. New Jersey composer Dick Thompson tells us:

I began as a jazz pianist in the big bands. No one of note! Studied composition with Wallingford Riegger. He straightened me out! Was choral arranger for too many companies: Chappell, Warner Bros., E.C. Schirmer, etc. This consumed most of my time and creative energy. Recently, I settled down to serious composition. An earlier version of *Tomorrow* was actually written in 1969 for a high school choral ensemble of mine. In 1995, I expanded it into its present form. The opening melodic phrase begins with an incomplete "Riegger" tone row and then continues "through composed" based on the Shakespeare text. The Gregg Smith Singers premiered the present version in New York City. ([to top](#)).

Harmonium has performed several works by Ted Corson, a member of the bass section, most

recently the suite *Invitation to The Fire* (1998). Ted is a Princeton-educated computer guy, former music teacher, bassoonist and arranger. A Harmonium member for 12 years, Ted wrote *Witches Stew* for the Harmonium Madrigal Singers (now Chamber Singers) biennial Halloween Concert where it was first performed in 1992. ([to top](#))

The *Tragedy of Macbeth* takes a playful look at Shakespeare's famous tale. Musically, the piece seems to parallel Macbeth's situation in which, after an initial period of cool logic, he gradually finds himself in deep water indeed, as events spin out of control. In addition to his activities as a composer, Ron Drotos is in demand as a pianist and arranger, collaborating with many top cabaret and jazz vocalists. He has worked on many Broadway shows including "*Swinging on a Star*," "*Smokey Joe's Cafe*" and "*The Life*." Mr. Drotos resides in New York City with his wife, mezzo-soprano Megan Friar. ([to top](#))

Born blind to a poor London family, George Shearing trained as a classical pianist but turned to jazz. He played dance-band gigs before settling in the USA in 1946. His quintet, first formed in 1949, lasted for many years and won a huge following for its many albums. He later worked extensively with Mel Tormé. He now enjoys an international reputation as a pianist, arranger and composer. Shearing is recognized for his inventive, orchestrated jazz. He has written over 300 compositions, including the classic, "Lullaby of Birdland," which has become a jazz standard. Shearing wrote *Music to Hear* as a result of a commission from the Dale Warland Singers in 1985. He explains:

It occurred to me that, obviously, I would need a first-rate lyricist...one who wouldn't be too busy to help. Fortunately, almost immediately William Shakespeare appeared and offered his literary services. In the opening selection, *Music to Hear*, my admiration for the works of Frederick Delius somehow seems to shine through. Then, bowing to the style of music composed during Shakespeare's time, I wrote *Is it for Fear to Wet a Widow's Eye?* and *Shall I Compare Thee?* Finally, segueing into the music I know and love best, I composed *Sigh No More, Ladies and Blow, Blow Thou Winter Wind*. ([to top](#))

Matthew Harris was born in 1956 in New York State, and studied at The Juilliard School, New England Conservatory and Harvard University. His teachers include many well-known names, among them Elliott Carter, Milton Babbitt, Roger Sessions and Donald Martino. He has received two grants in composition from the National Endowment for the Arts and fellowships from the New York Foundation for the Arts, Tanglewood, Composers Conference at Wellesley, Ives Center, Conductors Institute, and the MacDowell and Yaddo artist colonies. He has won prizes for his works in the Chautauqua Chamber Singers Choral Composition Contest and the National Association of Composers USA Young Composers' Competition. He has also won the Georges Enesco International Composition Award, the Society for New Music's Brian M. Israel Prize, and awards from ASCAP, BMI, Musicians' Accord, and the Taubman Institute.

Matthew's works have been performed by numerous distinguished groups including the Minnesota Orchestra, Houston Symphony, Lark Quartet, New York New Music Ensemble, the Dale Warland Singers and the New Amsterdam Singers, who performed his music at the televised Three Tenors concert at the Meadowlands. Some of his other commissions have come from the Fromm Foundation/Aspen Music Festival (where Mr. Harris was a Composer-in-Residence), I Cantori di New York, Modesto Symphony Orchestra, Haydn-Mozart Orchestra, and American Composers

Forum.

Matthew has taught at Fordham University and Kingsborough College, CUNY. He has been a board member of League-ISCM and American Composers Alliance and currently serves on the board of the MacDowell Artists Executive Committee. He currently lives in New York City, where he works as a musicologist.

Matthew provides the following notes on the pieces Harmonium is singing in this concert:

Shakespeare Songs are my musical settings of the lyrics to songs in Shakespeare's plays. The cycle comprises fourteen songs, divided into four books. Book III was completed in 1992, and premiered by the New Amsterdam Singers, Clara Longstreth, director, in March 1993.

Instead of the lively romp found in other settings of this lyric, my *It was a Lover and His Lass* is a slow, gentle idyll of young love in the spring. *You Spotted Snakes* has slippery chromaticism (in mock 1940s close harmony style) to describe all the creepy things to be kept away in contrast to the very diatonic lullaby chorus. The women in *Sigh No More Ladies* sigh ("ah, ha") and sing ("la, la"), though the men tell them not to. But they both come together for rollicking choruses of "Hey nonny, nonny." The last song, *O Mistress Mine*, is a slow, heavenly coda that expands on the lessons of youth and love in the first song.

Book IV was completed in 1995 and premiered by the Central Bucks-West Choir, Joseph Ohrt, director, at the ACDA Regional Convention in Philadelphia, February, 1996. Rapid passages swirl through *Blow, Blow thou Winter Wind*, climaxing in an extended coda of 12 vocal parts. (The idea of using triple rhythms for wind came from Monteverdi's famous "Zefiro Torno.") In contrast, *And Will A' Not Come Again* is a slow, simple ballad. *When Daffodils Begin to Peer* finishes the set in good old country style. ([to top](#))

The Harmonium New Jersey High School Student Composition Contest aims to encourage young choral composers, and create new repertoire. The contest was generously funded this year by a grant from the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation. We are encouraged by the quality of all of the entries, and would like especially to congratulate the following contestants.

Honorable Mentions were awarded to five students:

Rachel Rossos, Senior at The Peddie School, for her composition "Time Falls Like Rain", sponsored by Kristen Acker-Rund

Gray Kanarek, Senior at Franklin High School, for his composition "Shakespeare Song", sponsored by Betty DeMonic

Jason Przybylski, Senior at Whippany Park High School, for his composition "A Witches' Conversation", sponsored by Christopher Fostin of the Morris Plains Presbyterian Church

Alyssa Truitt, Senior at East Brunswick High School, for her composition "The Witches' Dance", sponsored by Rosanna Moran

Brian Bacon, Junior at Cinnaminson High School, for his composition "Sonnet 29", sponsored by Stephanie Berger

The Grand Prize Winner, whose piece is performed in this concert, is:

Chris Giamo, Senior at Paramus High School, for his composition "Rumour",

sponsored by Stevie Rawlings

Past Grand Prize Winners are:

1998 Brian Driscoll, Mt. Olive High School Lord, There's a Fire

This work is published by Alfred. Brian is studying composition at Montclair State

1999 Daniel Adamczyk, Piscataway High School Morning Hymn

Daniel has a scholarship to Westminster Choir College

2000 Stefan Swanson, Madison High School E Kounia Tou Theo (The Cradle of God)

Stefan is a freshman at Rowan University majoring in theory/composition ([to top](#))